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THE MUSHROOM GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

MGA BULLETIN

MAY 1961 · NUMBER 137

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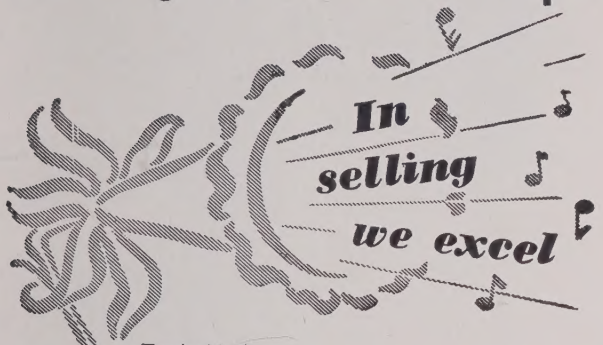

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The
MGA BULLETIN

MAY - 1961
NUMBER 137

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EDITORIAL

MGA CHAIRMAN AND BULK OIL SCHEME

Since the introduction of the Mushroom Growers' Association bulk oil purchase scheme, all grower participants, including my own Company, have effected quite considerable savings in their fuel bills, proving that the scheme is a sensible, workable idea, well worthy of encouragement, and it must be a source of gratification to those responsible, whose endeavours on our behalf were largely responsible for its inception, to see more growers taking advantage of the benefits to be gained by joining the scheme.

Generally it seems to be the practice of the oil companies to respond to upward fluctuations in the world price of oil by increasing their basic price per gallon, and downwards by offering larger rebates on bulk purchases, and there is no doubt that by negotiating collectively it is invariably possible to obtain a lower price than by individual bargaining. There exists, quite rightly, keen competition between the various oil companies, and a guaranteed market is of obvious value to them. Following recent discussions with various suppliers, I believe there is a possibility of obtaining a larger rebate than the current one, though the additional amount may apply to loads of not less than 1,200 gallons, which is generally considered by the oil companies to be an economic load.

Undoubtedly, the bulk oil purchase scheme can help every grower using this form of heating, in the constant fight against rising costs, and in order that as many growers as possible shall be attracted to the scheme and receive such benefits, the Executive Committee is considering passing all the benefits of the scheme to participant growers. I sincerely hope, therefore, that all growers using oil heating will give very careful consideration to joining the scheme, for a higher membership can only result in greater collective bargaining power and larger benefits to those concerned.

In order that the Executive Committee, when negotiating with the oil companies may be in possession of the fullest information, I shall

be grateful if growers *not already in the scheme* will write to me, c/o the Secretary, giving the following information:—

Annual Oil consumption.
Size of Tank(s).
Maximum capacity per delivery.
Estimated Annual Consumption.
Type of oil used and price being paid.

together with any other information or views which may be of interest.

I shall regard such information as strictly confidential.

The imposition of the 2d. per gallon tax on heavy oil, announced in the recent Budget, came as a great shock, particularly as it follows Government grants to encourage the installation of oil heating systems. Growers may be assured that the matter is being taken up in the strongest possible terms, both by your Executive Committee and by the NFU. In the meantime, why not offset all, or at least part, of this iniquitous tax by joining the MGA scheme? **Graham Griffiths.**

NEW MGA CHAIRMAN

New Vice-Chairman and Committee Members

At the meeting of the Executive Committee which followed immediately behind the Annual General Meeting, Mr. Graham Griffiths, managing director of a 130,000 sq. ft. tray system farm at Congresbury, Somerset, was unanimously elected Chairman, having been Vice-Chairman last year. Mr. A. St. J. Berry, a 12,000 sq. ft. tray farmer at Ruislip, Middx., is the new Vice-Chairman.

It was announced at the A.G.M., that the voting for the two general seat vacancies on the Executive Committee resulted as follows:— Mr. Raymond Thompson (65 votes) and Mr. J. Stewart-Wood (57) elected; not elected, Mr. P. K. L. Danks (39) and Mr. S. A. F. Sampson (36). About 40% of the U.K. Grower Members voted in the election, the votes being counted under the supervision of Mr. Henry Haynes, Senior Horticultural Secretary to the NFU.

The poll was much heavier than was the case before postal voting was introduced and when members were elected only by those members attending the A.G.M. Both Mr. Thompson and Mr. J. Stewart-Wood are past chairmen of the Association.

At the recent meeting of the Publicity Committee Mr. Danks was co-opted to that committee. Mr. Sampson already serves by virtue of the fact that he is a spawn distributor. Mr. T. J. Rudkin, who has served on this committee for some years, was also again co-opted. Two new members who were elected to that committee were Mr. J. G. Batchelor and Mr. N. R. Cooper.

AREA C ACTIVE

A meeting of the organising committee for Area C (Midlands) was held at the English Garden Hotel, Norman Cross, on 6th April. The arrangements were made by the hon. sec., Norman Cooper, and the chairman, Fred. Atkins, presided. A number of matters of Area interest were discussed, and the programme for 1961 was agreed. Consideration of a scheme for an Area Advisory Panel was postponed until 29th June.

ANNUAL LUNCH AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Park Lane Hotel, London, provided an excellent venue for the Annual Lunch and Annual General Meeting of the MGA which took place on Wednesday, 22nd March, and was presided over by the MGA Chairman, Mr. P. B. Stanley-Evans.

It was a disappointment that at the last moment Lord Waldegrave, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, was prevented from attending owing to illness. The Association was most fortunate in that Mr. Godman Irvine, Conservative M.P. for Rye, and Secretary of the Parliamentary Horticulture Committee of the Conservative Party, was able, at very short note, to step into the breach. He was accompanied by Mrs. Godman Irvine.

Other guests included Mr. F. W. Toovey, Director of the Glasshouse Crops Research Institute at Littlehampton, Mrs. Toovey, and Mr. Henry Haynes, senior horticultural secretary to the NFU.

Prior to lunch those attending joined in the Chairman's reception at which there was a publicity display and " Monty Mushroom ", the new publicity symbol, was introduced for the first time.

About 120 people sat down to lunch and Grace was said by Capt. G. P. Lawrence. The loyal toast was proposed by the Chairman, followed by the toast to " Our Guests ". To this toast Mr. Godman Irvine responded and in the course of an excellent speech said the first problem of the industry was to educate and interest the public in mushrooms as a food and to make sure there was a steady demand. He said " Your Association was quick to appreciate how important that is and I have been most impressed by the way your publicity has been used to focus attention on the mushroom as a welcome addition to our mealtime."

Referring to the work of Mrs. Godman Irvine in the Kitchen he said " One of the minor decisions which the ladies have to take regularly is what they are going to provide their families to eat, and I must say that is a sort of seven days a week job that demands thought and imagination and perseverence in the face of relentless family criticism. That seems to be a very big job to me. Most of us have complained from time to time about something coming back to be eaten again but your industry has tackled that problem and provided the housewife with some real practical help."

Later the M.P. for Rye said that it was quite clear that mushroom growers has a great success story to tell and it was also quite clear to him—he had been reading about mushroom growing—that it was one of the most complex and exacting kinds of production there is. " I am only an ordinary farmer and I must say I was horrified at some of the things that might happen to you with your mushrooms, the production of which, under highly artificial conditions, needs great experience and skill."

Before sitting down Mr. Godman Irvine referred to the recent survey of the industry, carried out by the Ministry, and acknowledged the good work of the Glasshouse Crops Research Institute under the direction of Mr. Toovey.

Thanks to Mr. Godman Irvine were expressed by the Vice-Chairman of the MGA, Mr. Graham Griffiths, who said, " I feel Mr. Godman Irvine is a man we can talk to and who would listen to our problems " adding that, as Vice-Chairman of the MGA, he hoped Mr. Godman Irvine would "honour us by having a talk if we went along to the Houses of Parliament."

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(Mr. P. B. Stanley-Evans)

In his annual report, described by one publication as " far-sighted and statesmanlike ", the MGA Chairman referred, in his opening remarks when reviewing the industry, to the fact that expansion was running at 15% to 20% per year and, if anything, was accelerating. Prices during the year had held firm but the previous year there had been an exceptionally hot summer. " These are comparatively prosperous times but a recession would have an immediate effect " he said. It was necessary for the industry to expand, perhaps keeping slightly ahead of demand, but there were a number of reasons why prices should not be allowed to become unduly high, among them the fact that high prices would attract foreign competition. Imports of fresh mushrooms had not been unduly high although they had doubled over the past six years. Eire, with its preferential treatment, had grandiose schemes in the background. This expansion needed careful thought, for additional produce must have an economic market. Gone about the right way consumption could be doubled in ten years but it had to be a gradual process for, as all well knew, a sudden influx of mushrooms always resulted in a price drop. What was needed was some form of stabilisation all round and members might like to consider a special meeting to discuss the problem. A little conscience searching by some members might not come amiss.

Research. The Association was reasonably happy with the amount of research going on at Toddington where there had been the welcome addition of a geneticist to study spawn strains and a nematologist to work on eelworm. The translation into commercial practice of the work done on the cecid was eagerly awaited. The MGA was fortunate in having such an energetic sub-committee.

Oil Scheme. This was running well with yearly sales of about 1½ million gallons. It was now open to Grower Members only. The majority of members supported the scheme through thick and thin but there were some who, for one reason or another, did not join in but supported the MGA fund financially and others who used the scheme to bargain with their own suppliers to get the price down, but who did not support the scheme in any way. This latter attitude was, in his opinion, quite indefensible.

1960 Conference. At Weston-super-Mare the annual conference had attracted a record attendance of over 200 with delegates paying a fee for the first time. The chief speaker was Prof. von Sengbusch of the

Max-Planck Institute. There were many excellent papers, some given by ordinary commercial producers who deserved very special thanks. The chairman added " I hope the flight of so many cups to Northern Ireland is only a temporary set-back and I must commend the gallant rearguard action by that well-known Surrey farm".

Trading Company. Members will recall that, two years ago, at the annual general meeting, a decision was taken to form a co-operative. This matter of trading has been the subject of long discussion and the Executive Committee have taken the advice of the NFU and have decided to form a trading company, pure and simple, to be known as Mushroom Growers Ltd. The initial Board will consist of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Honorary Treasurer of the MGA and, with the NFU Development Company holding one voting share, members could rest assured that their rights would be adequately safeguarded. Mushroom Growers Ltd., will deal with the oil scheme and, among other things, negotiations have already begun for the bulk purchase of trays and possibly bed boards. Some degree of standardisation is obviously desirable if a reasonable saving is to be made. In addition, a meeting has already taken place with a firm of heating engineers with a view to making a saving for members on all boiler installations and the ancillary equipment. Through the Executive, members will retain complete control and the NFU will hold a watching brief, also in the interests of members. Cost of production must be kept down and this is one of the ways in which this may be brought about.

Continental Trip. The trip to Holland, Belgium and France last year was undertaken by some 30 growers and was a great success. Great kindness was shown to the party, particularly by **Dr. Bels** in Holland and **M. Guy de Man** of Belgium and **M. de Man** has now been made an Honorary Member of the Association.

Postal Voting. This has again been very successful but more nominations are required another year.

Fertiliser Subsidy. After the acceptance of our case for the fertiliser subsidies being made available to mushroom growers, without the " spreading on own land " proviso, we were in high hopes that this would now have become fact and not fancy, but the Ministry were unable to include it in their 1961 programme. It is hoped that it will be on the programme for next year.

Ministry of Agriculture Survey. A full report of this survey appeared in the *Bulletin*. It was quite the best survey ever undertaken in the industry and it is greatly to the credit of growers that they co-operated in the way they did.

Nitrogen Analysis. It had also been hoped by now to get this scheme for testing compost under way but, because a wide variation was found in the analyses returned by different laboratories for samples taken from the same heap, further investigation is necessary before the scheme can get going.

ACTUAL RECORDS

IN LBS. PER SQUARE FOOT

ON MODERN TRAY FARM USING
STANDARD MANURE IN SAME HOUSE

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2·08 2·55 1·91 2·36

AND THEN

3·33 3·04 3·21

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Survey. Because we all believe that it is in our own interests to have a report on the problems of the industry, an expenditure of £400 has been authorised to conduct a marketing survey and this report will be the subject of a talk by Mr. David Pickard of Produce Studies Ltd., later in this meeting and will eventually be published in the *Bulletin*.
Leedex Ltd. This firm of Public Relations Consultants has been engaged by the Association, through the Publicity Sub-Committee, in an advisory capacity, now that more money is available for publicity in general.
Membership. Your Secretary will report a record membership, with U.K. Grower Membership up by sixteen. Only a few growers of any size are outside the organisation and members should try their utmost to encourage them to join. Owing to the general rise in costs it has been reluctantly agreed that the subscription for Overseas Members should be raised to £5. It was in January, 1950, that the subscription of three guineas was originally fixed and, much as we would like to, we cannot continue at this low figure, faced as we are and have been over the past years with increasing costs.

Committee. I would like to express my deep personal gratitude to all the members of the Executive Committee and the Sub-Committees for their support. Twelve of the fifteen members of the Executive attended every meeting.

Staff. My thanks must also be given to the MGA staff for their help and loyalty.

Mr. Stanley-Evans concluded his report by expressing particular thanks to **Mr. F. C. Atkins** and **Mr. E. A. Gook,** both of whom, having completed six years unbroken service on the Executive, could not, under the rules, stand for re-election.

PUBLICITY REPORT

Mr. G. V. Allen, Chairman of the Publicity Sub-Committee, said: –

"The past year has been a busy and active one for your Publicity Committee. Thanks to the money forthcoming from our members our available funds have increased substantially, so enabling us both to continue to operate our established methods of Public Relations work and advertising and yet, at the same time, to advance into newer fields of action.

Last year it was decided that our Executive should lower the voluntary spawn levy of 6d. per carton to 3d. but, at the same time, make it a condition of MGA Grower Membership that this contribution be paid by all Grower Members on all spawn used. The wisdom of this decision is self-evident when I tell you that from a gross receipt of some £8,200 odd in 1959, when you paid 6d. per carton, last year we raised £600 more from the new compulsory 3d. per carton levy. These figures speak for themselves. I only wish our other contributors, mainly our wholesalers and salesmen, had risen equally to the occasion. I regret to say that, in fact, their contributions fell by some £60 in this same period of great effort from the growers themselves. I would like, at this juncture, to appeal again to these salesmen to play their full

part. Some already do, and we thank them for continued support, but to others who do not I would add that mushrooms must be one of the few lines which they have as a regular all-the-year-round source of income. Mushrooms are now rightly regarded as a food. More and more are eaten by more and more people, nearly all the year round.

Whilst on this subject of publicity contributions I would like to ask those few members, or even non-member growers, who have not paid up in the past to re-consider their attitudes. They surely will concede that publicity is paying some dividends. Is it fair to reap the rewards of an improved market at the expense of all your fellow growers without paying your share? Your consciences should prick you. Please think again and throw in your share. Even if you are not an MGA member, for some reason known only to yourself, you can still send along a contribution to publicity which benefits members and non-members alike.

Now to review the year's work. Early in the year our P.R.O., **Miss Valerie Baker,** got married and left our employ in the late autumn. Her place was taken by **Miss Rachel Owen**, who was selected after careful scrutiny, from over 75 applicants: an operation which caused the Publicity Committee and your Secretary some really strenuous meetings, not without some amusement attached. Miss Owen is doing splendid work for which she deserves our congratulations, especially as it is an entirely new field for her. We are all sure we made a wise choice in offering her the appointment.

Miss Baker, or **Mrs. March** as she now is, gave us wonderful service and our thanks are due to her for all she did. She has recently rejoined us on a part-time basis as a cookery adviser and demonstrator and will, I am sure, prove a great asset in this capacity.

You have had, throughout the year, a really hard working and painstaking committee, not one member of which can be described as an idle "yes-man" as I have found to my cost, or benefit, on many occasions. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking them for all the time and work they have put in. Attendances have been excellent, often at great inconvenience, with the meagre reward of £1 a day for expenses plus a doubtful lunch. I should like to thank **Mr. G. W. Baker**, my Vice-Chairman, for his support and for his help in supplying mushrooms for presentations, photographs and cookery demonstrations: always the usual Broadham Produce standard.

Our thanks must also be expressed to our Secretary, **Winston Alderton,** and to his assistant, **Mrs. Garrett,** for all the hard work they have put in for Publicity on top of all their normal MGA routine work.

I will now briefly summarise our activities over the past year. Firstly, the Paper Bag scheme still continues to operate well and over ten million bags were sold last year. We should still like to see a wider coverage of the country when possible.

Secondly, all our usual services have been maintained: the maintaining and making of new contacts with all the food and food press world and co-operating with such contacts whenever possible. The

range of this work includes such items as press releases (four last year), supplying photographs and fresh mushrooms for photography to national and house magazines, and providing information for articles. We have supported cookery demonstrations given by the Gas Board, the Potato Marketing Board (in the North of England). We attended the Birmingham 'Homes and Gardens' Exhibition, the Chelsea Flower Show and the Food Fair. Often, display advertising was arranged to coincide with the above events. Colour photographs were supplied to Miss Marguerite Patten for her new book "Cookery in Colour". Mrs. March has now joined the Women's Gas Federation speakers panel and will be giving cookery demonstrations which will, of course, include lots of mushrooms on the menu.

A highlight of the year was a Press outing by river launch from Charing Cross pier to Gravesend and thence by coach to Fort Darland mushrooms farm at Gillingham. Both lunch and liquor were served on board and the day was perfect for the time of year. At the farm **Messrs. Clifford** showed the party round their unique set-up and supplied tea for the guests, who were returned to London by coach. Everyone seemed both impressed and appreciative.

Mrs. March carried out two small interesting surveys of which you have no doubt already read, one dealing with the handling and treatment of mushrooms in transit, which showed that there left much to be desired; and the other was conducted at the Food Fair last September, where she asked at least fifty people about their mushroom tastes and buying habits. Following a suggestion by the Executive Committee, we have recently engaged a firm of professionals to carry out a pilot survey into the marketing, distribution and consumption of mushrooms. You will shortly be hearing a full report on the findings.

Finally, I now come to report on the really major step taken during the year. At the commencement we obtained the services of Leedex Ltd., a firm of Public Relations and Advertising agents, and Mr. J. L. Mc. Morrish, the managing director of that firm, is now our consultant on publicity matters. Every week he and our own P.R.O. liaise together and discuss our plans and problems. From this joint effort has emerged the plan to co-ordinate all our printed publicity material into one central theme. We are launching our newly established *Mushroom Information Bureau* upon the press and public next week, with a Press Conference and reception at the Mermaid Theatre Restaurant when our new symbol '*Monty Mushroom*' will be introduced to the Press world. All our future publicity work will emanate from the Mushroom Information Bureau and this Press function will be a start to a year's programme which will put into effect the schemes prepared by Mr. Mc.Morrish and our P.R.O. These plans include the introduction of 'Monty Mushroom', the distribution of posters and window stickers featuring 'Monty' to retailers throughout the country and to all MGA members in April. This is the commencement of a campaign planned to make an impact on the housewife at the point of sale. Please, all of you, get your local retailers to display their posters. They should all receive them. You, yourselves, can obtain copies and will shortly be offered van transfers for your personal use.

SNAPPED
AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Top Row (l. to r.): Mr. Godman Irvine, M.P. (Guest of Honour), Mrs. Graham Griffiths, Mr. V. L. Barrow and Mr. H. Kilian.

Centre (l. to r.): Mr. Eric White, Mr. J. A. Linfield and Mr. Sidney Pointing; Mr. G. V. Allen and his son Michael; Mr. D. J. Longhill and Mr. Guy Reed.

Bottom (l. to r.): Mr. A. Condell with Mr. P. K. L. Banks and Mr. E. A. Gook; M. Guy de Man, Mr. P. B. Stanley-Evans in conversation with Mrs. Lawrence; Major D. A. Wilson, Mr. Gordon Batchelor and Mr. Stanley-Evans.

A series of town promotions is also planned and the first one is due in Oxford shortly. For one week mushrooms will be publicised in a variety of ways and the effect of this promotion will be measured. The above schemes, in conjunction with our special price-tag chip covers (which I hope you will all buy for at least some of your requirements) should really bring mushrooms to the forefront of the shops.

As a last word I would say, please maintain your publicity contributions, encourage everyone else to do so, ask your salesmen to support us financially and chase any non-contributing growers you may know. Publicity *is* paying off, no matter what the few die-hards may say. Production continues to rise; no one can say prices have fallen relatively. The reason? Well, it's obvious to anyone with the intelligence that any successful mushroom grower must possess!"

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. F. L. Filmer (Hon. Treasurer) said: The Financial Statement for the year ended 31st October, 1960, is before you, and from it you will be able to see that I am in the happy position of again being able to report a satisfactory year for the Association's finances.

Turning first to the **General Account,** we had a surplus for the year of £630, which is somewhat more than the previous year due to a credit of £250 from the Oil Scheme for administration expenditure. Our income from subscriptions increased by the modest sum of £60 but we expect this figure to be somewhat higher next time because the Executive Committee has decided to raise the subscription rate for Overseas Members to £5 from £3 3s. 0d., at which figure it has stood since 1950. This relatively small increase barely makes up for the fall in the value of money during the last 11 years.

Coming now to the **Publicity Fund,** you will notice that there is shown a surplus of income of £4,973 and this certainly looks a rather large amount. However, it is not quite what it seems because the figure for "Spawn Contributions" is this year inflated by £1,800, which was estimated to be due from our spawn suppliers on the date the accounts were closed but which, for obvious accountancy reasons, were not paid over until a later date. At any time of the year this time lag is quite unavoidable. Speaking personally I really cannot see eye to eye with the piece of accountancy, but our Auditors insist that it is correct in order to satisfy the Tax Inspector. This actual surplus of income was therefore really £3,173 which goes to the strengthening of the reserves at the disposal of the Publicity Committee. It is interesting to note that during this first year of the compulsory threepenny spawn contribution, the amount received actually rose by £600 over the previous year when the voluntary contribution was 6d.! I leave you to work out the implications. This increase was certainly higher than anticipated and partly explains why the surplus was greater than we expected.

If there are any points on which you would like any further explanation I shall be happy to deal with them. In conclusion I would like to pay tribute to our Secretary, Mr. Alderton who, ably supported by

other members of the MGA staff, guards our day-to-day finances most jealously and is no small factor in the healthiness of our Association and the excellent financial position which I am able to report.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Owing to pressure on space copies of the Accounts will not be published until the June issue of *The Bulletin*.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Membership: The membership figures of the Association continue to rise and now stand at the record figure of 712 all fully paid up. In the year under review, United Kingdom Grower Membership increased by sixteen to 276. Overseas Grower Members topped the 200 mark for the first time, the actual figure being 201—an increase of six. At 235, Associate Members showed a drop of seven so the net increase in total paid-up membership was fifteen. As most members are aware, there are considerably more members on the books but account is only taken of those whose subscriptions are actually paid within the twelve months to 31st October, 1960.

Bulletin: With a total of 520 pages, the Bulletin averages well over 40 pages an issue, compared with the thirty-two page issue to which we are committed each month. It is unfortunate that articles of a practical nature are not more plentiful and I would welcome many more of these from members. Payment is made for all matter used.

Editorial Board: Mr. Fred. C. Atkins and Dr. R. L. Edwards continued to serve throughout the year and their uncomplaining execution of a task which is quite often somewhat tiresome reflects great credit on them both. I am quite sure that all members join me in thanking them.

Advertisers: Our advertisers stick with us through thick and thin and I am grateful to them, particularly for their co-operation in the matter of copy and proofs.

Finance: A larger average issue of the Bulletin is, of course, accompanied by extra costs but, so far, we continue to hold our own.

Executive Committee: The fifteen members of the Executive Committee returned an average attendance of slightly over fourteen for the five meetings held. I doubt if this record of attendances has ever been bettered since the MGA was formed. The attendances were:—Mr. P. B. Stanley-Evans (Chairman), Mr. Graham Griffiths (Vice-Chairman), Mr. F. L. Filmer (Hon. Treasurer), Messrs. G. V. Allen, Fred. C. Atkins, G. W. Baker, A. J. Berry, F. Bleazard, R. Dumbreck, R. L. Edwards, E. A. Gook and R. Thompson all attended the five meetings. Messrs. J. G. Batchelor, J. A. Linfield and A. A. Spencer attended four meetings.

Publicity Sub-Committee: This committee met ten times and the attendances were:—Mr. G. V. Allen (Chairman), and Mr. P. B. Stanley-Evans attended ten meetings, Messrs. G. W. Baker and A. J. Berry—nine meetings. Mr. F. L. Filmer attended eight meetings, Mr. T. J. Rudkin, seven meetings and Mr. G. C. Griffiths, five.

DISCUSSION

Dr. R. L. Edwards: I do not see in the statement of the accounts the income received under the oil scheme during the year. I know there was

Mr. Graham Griffiths, the new MGA Chairman.

(l. to r.): Mr. N. R. Cooper, Sir Conrad Collier, Mr. T. P. Holmes and Mr. E. A. Gook.

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a reference to keeping that separate but I should imagine it would appear somewhere.

Mr. F. L. Filmer: This account is drawn up by the Auditors and this is their way of doing it, but you will find it in the Balance Sheet on the left-hand side down at the bottom—rebate on fuel purchases by members £1,450 12s. 2d.

Dr. Edwards: Yes, I saw that, but that is the accumulated balance to date, is it not? Is there not an income during the year anywhere?

Mr. Filmer: The auditors recommended dealing with it in this way and that £250 of it should be charged as administrative expenses, and that is how it gets into the general account. The money, I imagine, will be put in to form a basis of working capital in the trading company we are going to set up.

Mr. G. W. Baker: Why should the oil money be used to subsidise Association funds?

The Chairman: The original idea was that the money was required in order to further a trading company which is being formed. When that trading company is formed it is proposed to use the oil money, the whole of it, to further the company's plans to deal in other commodities of which today I have only mentioned one.

Mr. Baker: I appreciate your point but that does not alter the fact that this £250 has been used to offset Association funds.

The Secretary: The transfer of £250 is a book transfer, nothing more; it is a matter of using figures, moving them from one side to the other. No money has been transferred at all although certain administrative expenses have, in fact, been incurred as a result of the scheme.

Mr. Thompson: I would like to thank you Mr. Chairman, first of all, for the excellent speeches and for being as good a Chairman as we have ever had. I would also like to thank Mr. Allen for taking on that absolutely ghastly task of publicity sub-committee chairman. Some of us know how dreadful it can be.

I am a great fan of the Research Institute at Littlehampton and of Mr. Toovey's. I think he does a marvellous job. What can we do to get down to helping him by experimental stations? At Littlehampton the Glasshouse Crops Research Institute do a wonderful job for mushrooms, but the experimental research stations in the provinces are not backing them up. Can we do something to help?

The Chairman: I think that is a very cogent question. What can we do to further the excellent research work which is being done at Toddington and to get experimentation done? I think all we can do—and I think we are doing it—is to take every conceivable opportunity to hammer it home where we can get some assistance. I spent most of the last lunch on the Toddington Open Day working very hard on two gentlemen, strategically placed one on each side of me, with that end in view. I am sure that we all admire the work which has been done by civil servants but we as growers do tend to take the bull by the horns and get something done at what the civil servant would think a rather

disgraceful speed. Whether there is anything else to be done, I do not know. I actually had a member of the Research Council on one side and one of the very senior members of the National Agricultural Advisory Service on the other who, one would imagine, would be most receptive. They might well be doing something at their own speed through the usual channels.

Mr. Atkins: Yes: I did suggest some time ago—two Annual Meetings ago, I think—that if we were prepared to pay sixpence a carton of spawn for publicity we might even be prepared to pay sixpence a carton of spawn for research—an experiment station controlled by growers. We are doing better on 3d. a carton compulsory for publicity than we were doing by a voluntary sixpence. I think this oil scheme income should almost at once, as soon as the company is formed—Mushroom Growers' Limited, it is proposed to call it—be used in this way. I am sure George Baker would not mind the MGA getting £250 out of something which saved the growers over £14,500—and the £1,250 left might well go into the kitty of Mushroom Growers' Ltd. If it remains in the kitty it is going to be taxed. Why cannot that money be devoted to an MGA controlled experimental station, on the smallest possible scale?

The MGA Research Committee has worked very hard in the last twelve months in its work of trying to get the Ministry, through the Agricultural Advisory Council, the Agricultural Improvement Council and the Agricultural Improvement Council's experimental committee, to do certain things, and if you are lucky, after about six months a recommendation is made and you get what you want. This is simply not good enough. We can fight very hard and in due course, in their time, when the Ministry is persuaded, we shall get 25 per cent of what we want. The M.P. from Rye, at lunch to-day, spoke a good deal of sense, I think. We are independent; what we have got so far is due entirely to independence. We have persuaded authority that research is important and we have, I think, absolutley first-class research, but what does it mean? I think we have two things to do: Make a condition of membership another threepence a carton of spawn, which I am afraid most people would not accept; or Let Mushroom Growers' Ltd. the MGA's own trading company, put certain profits, if the alternative is that they are going to be swallowed by taxation, into a very small growing unit in which we can find out all about through-spawning, super-spawning, surface spawning, casing with ashes and all those 101 problems which at this moment each one of us is trying to solve separately. That is the way to use the profits.

I have, in fewer words and more gently, personally told the Ministry my opinion of their reaction and because of that I feel that this was a personal reaction. If it would help the MGA I would be glad to stand down and get somebody else to take over my job. I would be very happy to leave them to do that work, which I think is essential. We should certainly get what we can, but let us not wait indefinitely.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Atkins for, as one would expect, a very reasoned and excellent idea. Would you not agree that we would be foolish not to hammer away and attempt to get that free grant as well—two experiments are better than one? This is really not the place to assure you that you cannot possibly resign from the Research Committee, but I assure you that you cannot, and I think one of the first things the Research Committee should do under my successor is elaborate and draw up a scheme, which will obviously require a lot of detail with regard to cost, and so on. We have an excellent Research Sub-committee and I think it would be a first-class idea if, at their next meeting, they worked out rough details based on your suggestion and put it before the Executive.

You would be prepared to act as chairman of a sub-committee to draw up a plan for a Mushroom Growers' Ltd. experimental station, would you not?

Mr. Atkins: I think it is time for that: the first two efforts were abortive and I am quite happy to try again.

The Chairman: Then I suggest we take positive action on this and that Mr. Atkins is empowered to produce a report and to co-opt anyone else whom he desires to help him, and to see what we can do about this matter. Does that meet the wishes of members or has anybody anything else they would like to say on this particular matter?

Are there any other matters concerning the reports before we pass on to discussion of future policy?

Mr. E. Palfrey: I understand the Committee have decided to raise the Overseas Members' subscription to £5. I would like to ask three questions: (1) can the Committee decide to do this or does it have to be a recommendation to the Annual General Meeting; (2) how much used the subscription to be; (3) how much do the Bulletins and other services which we provide to overseas growers and other people cost?

My own feeling is that the people overseas are worth enough to us to make it a cost-basis fee. I think we cannot do anything but benefit from their membership because ideas will come in through it. I do not think they can affect our commercial position but they can help us and I do not think we should charge them more than cost.

The Chairman: The previous cost to overseas members was three guineas. I gather the gist of your question is: is it (*a*) proper to put that subscription up to five guineas without reference to an Annual General Meeting; (*b*) desirable to charge them any subscription at all?

Mr. Palfrey: No: I would like sufficient to be charged to be on a cost basis.

The Chairman: That is exactly what we have done in practice. The cost of the Bulletin has risen, as I mentioned earlier, quite steeply since the figure of three guineas was reached and the present £5 is very much in line with the cost of their membership. You were not suggesting, I gather, that we should not charge them a subscription at all?

Mr. Palfrey: No, I really just wanted to know how much it cost us to have them as members, and that is that.

The Secretary: The subscription of three guineas for an overseas member was fixed on 24th January, 1950, and since that time the value of the pound has dropped by 40 per cent. In the last ten years wages have increased by about 100%. Much of my time is spent on the Bulletin, and that is not taken into account. The material cost is about 3/4½d. an issue, which is £2-odd a year, plus the cost of envelopes, which has gone up about 50 per cent, plus cost of postage which has gone up about 100 per cent, in ten years. I have not calculated the cost of compiling the Bulletin. I would think that £5 is not out of the way. Actually, the suggestion to raise it to £5 came from an overseas member two years ago. The fact that your Balance Sheet shows a favourable balance has nothing whatever to do with the fact that as we proceed at the moment overseas members are subsidised by subscriptions from home members, and I do not think that is right.

The Chairman: I think it is very right and proper that this meeting should enquire into these matters, but I hope the Secretary has explained this position to you and you now feel the increase is justified.

Mr. Palfrey: I do not feel that we should subsidise but neither do I feel that we should overcharge.

The Chairman: You now appreciate that we are not subsidising them and that as far as it is possible to work out without a great deal of complicated mathematics £5 is reasonable. I entirely agree that this meeting is held so that members can make these enquiries if they feel so inclined.

Mr. R. Thompson: I subscribe to the American Mushroom Institute News and it has recently risen in price quite fantastically.

The Chairman: I think the general feeling of the room with regard to this is that we are not swindling our overseas members. We are delighted to have them and we are charging them a right and proper amount for their subscription.

The Secretary: I think it is very right and proper of Mr. Palfrey to have raised this, and there is just one other point. I should think that 50 per cent of the queries about growing come from overseas.

Mr. Baker: Is the Bulletin short of material?

The Secretary: Yes—any publication like ours is always short of material. There is enough material to make up three bulletins ahead but we want something lighter—such as a description of somebody's farm, or something about sheep manure which is of great interest to our overseas members who have sheep.

Mr. Baker: That rather accounts for the fact that the Bulletin is full of reprints at the expense of those members who support our Conference and get a copy of the paper and then have to receive a Bulletin full of the same stuff they have already had.

The Secretary: Not only that, but they get the questions and answers thrown in, but that is another service to the Association's members. And if we didn't publish these papers delivered at Weston they never would be published at all.

Mr. Baker: But why can this not be paid for by members who do not support our Conference?

The Chairman: I think this is actually a fairly wide subject and I suggest that if you were willing to be co-opted on to the Editorial Board for a short while you might be able to put these views forward. Seriously, are you suggesting that the Bulletin is pursuing an undesirable policy in this direction which you would genuinely like to see altered?

Mr. Baker: I am expressing the views of a number of growers.

The Chairman: I am going to suggest then, Mr. Baker, that you do have a quiet word with the Editorial Board, repeat the views of the growers who have spoken to you and see what they have to say on the matter.

Dr. Edwards: May I comment on that, having been both praised and blamed for things that happen in the Bulletin?

In principle I rather agree with Mr. Baker. Quite a big proportion of our members were at Weston and will have seen these things—and in fact I have seen them four times now, I saw the proofs before Weston, I read them and heard them read at Weston, and I have seen them in proof form and in the published Bulletin, and I do not want to see them any more. But there is a lack of original, interesting contributions for the Bulletin and there is precedent for putting Conference material in; that has been done several times before, and I think on other occasions it has been published separately as well.

Mr. Thompson: I think most of us receive the Bulletin and probably read it within two hours. I know the Secretary is dead keen that it should not make a loss, but could we possibly expand it and make it bigger? It could not be better, but could we make it larger so that we

(l. to r.): M. Guy de Man and Mr. G. V. Allen with three members of the MGA staff take a close look at Monty Mushroom.

could spend, say, two and a half hours reading it? The moment it arrives I open it and go away somewhere quiet and read it, and I think most of us do the same. It is absolutely first class, so could we make it larger and include not only those reprints but more information on how to grow mushrooms better and larger?

The Chairman: This is obviously a matter which is of concern to more than one member. I suggest that anybody else who has any comments to make on the Bulletin make them now, and I suggest that we have the future position of the Bulletin before us on the agenda of the next Executive meeting and that the comments which have been put forward here are collected together and discussed and that alterations which are deemed desirable are made. May I have any other suggestions or comments on the Bulletin?

The Secretary: Not one grower in twenty ever writes one word for the Bulletin. Mr. Thompson wants a larger Bulletin, but at the moment it is physically impossible. I have no time to write articles. I made a great point of an average of 40-odd pages instead of 32. It is all very well to ask for a publication of 100 pages—splendid—but that is a month's work!

The Chairman: The Secretary has told you his side. I am still asking for constructive suggestions.

Mr. Atkins: I have not a constructive suggestion but a constructive request. The function of the Editorial Board is really to reject anything which is outrageous and to look through the proofs with all the care it can, correcting the technical spelling. We cannot—and the Secretary has not got time to go out among growers and ask for articles.

The great criticism of the Bulletin is two fold. First, that it is too technical. But it is often a reprint of something which appeared in the German language, say, which we cannot understand. Therefore we do an invaluable service to mushroom growing throughout the world by having it translated into English so that we can understand it. That is a major function the MGA performs. Secondly, there is the other side; that we never have anything useful to the grower. Who is going to write that useful-to-the-grower article? The growers expect the Secretary, submerged in oil and publicity and committees, to do it but he cannot. The MGA Bulletin can be as large as you like but the Mushroom Growers' Association must subsidise it. We are only too anxious to publicise useful articles, and will put aside scientific articles to put "useful" things in—but who is going to write them? If growers with ideas on how to do better will just put something down on paper for the Bulletin we will publish it.

The Chairman: I think the case for the defence has been put pretty cogently and firmly and it seems to me that any critics might well be asked to produce the Bulletin. They can certainly be asked to produce material for it. On every hand the people who are responsible for the hard work are saying they are not getting enough material, and obviously if they have superior material to the material Mr. Baker is not wildly enthusiastic about they will print it; until they have it they cannot possibly print it.

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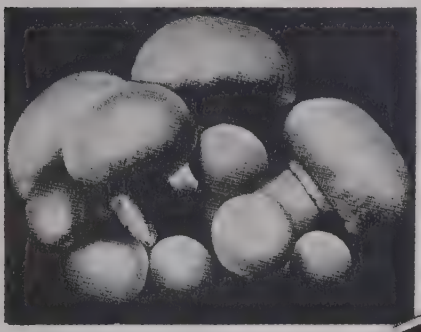

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7	388		38	–	
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9	224	(7 days)	40	–	
10	–		41	150	
11	–		42	144	
12	–				3·00 lb/sq/ft
13	1158				(42 days)
14	493				
15	–	1·95 lb/sq/ft			
16	281	(14 days)			
17	–				
18	–				
19	122				
20	36				
21	81				
22	144	2·27 lb/sq/ft			
23	45	(21 days)			
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25	–				
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29	–	2·53 lb/sq/ft			
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Mr. Thompson: I would like to apologise and to agree with Mr. Atkins.

Mr. Palfrey: As regards the trading company we are setting up, I would like to ask whether it is a very good idea to put the control of the trading company in the hands of our presently elected Executive Committee or whether it would not be better to elect a separate controlling board. The other thing is that I wonder whether, if we do this at all, we are going to be dominated in the future by our money-raising activities to the exclusion of what I feel is something quite different—that is, the present MGA set-up, which is rather to help each other through association and not on commercial business lines.

The Chairman: I think, Mr. Palfrey, the first point I would make is that it is money-saving rather than money-raising. The whole basic idea of Mushroom Growers Ltd. will be to save you and other growers money which you are at present spending on your costs of production. I think that is a fundamental point on which you are not quite in line.

Mr. Palfrey: On a point of information, would it be in fact the aim of the trading company to make any profit?

The Chairman: The basic aim of the trading company would be to return the money it made to the members through reduced costs and probably reduced initial costs. That is the basic idea—to try and control this constant rise in production costs. Will you agree that this is a sound and businesslike idea for the Association to pursue?

Mr. Palfrey: Yes, and I thank you for that answer, but I do feel that perhaps if the Committee as presently elected deals with this trading company you may find their time becomes more and more occupied with this, because it is going to be so expansive.

The Chairman: At the moment, of course, there are only going to be I think it is three Directors from among the Executive Committee, so that even if these three should become fairly heavily involved it would still leave twelve members completely uninvolved. It is inconceivable that the working of the Executive Committee could be hamstrung in any way by the trading company as at present envisaged. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Palfrey: Yes, but I was looking ahead. My only experience has been of a voluntary association which set up sidelines and these money-saving sidelines quickly became dominant and very difficult to sit on.

The Chairman: I do feel, in fairness, Mr. Palfrey, that this is an infant; it is difficult to tell which way it is going and I think that your anxiety would probably be better faced at the AGM in two years' time, when somebody else can deal with it, because at this juncture we cannot tell which way it is going to go.

Mr. Palfrey: I think something quite useful is the exact relationship which the Committee has decided is desirable between the trading company and the association, and I would like to be given information on this—not now, necessarily, but at some time.

The Chairman: I will get the Secretary to drop you a line giving you the details.

Mr. Palfrey: I would like us all to know, because I think it is quite important.

The Secretary: It is proposed to publish it in the Bulletin. The suggestion here is that this meeting will know and the other members will not know. Mushroom Growers Ltd., is not going to do anything at all without the members knowing. It will be controlled in the first year by the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the MGA Executive and the Honorary Treasurer and nobody else, with one vote from the NFU Development Company. It will be controlled by the members through the Executive. I would not have thought there was any danger here of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman neglecting the work of the Association on behalf of Mushroom Growers Ltd., and certainly it was envisaged from the start that every member would be aware of what we were doing and would be made aware in the Bulletin as soon as we decided on the proper constitution and the future activities. I agree with the point you raise and that every member should know.

Mr. Palfrey: I know nothing of this. Could I ask that the constitution be published and that the Annual General Meeting next year discuss it?

The Secretary: Yes; it was deliberately raised at this meeting to provoke this type of discussion. I do not think the Executive would wish anything to be done without the members knowing.

Mrs. Stanley-Evans: Might I ask if it is necessary for us to hold the Conference this year in either Yarmouth or Lowestoft?

The Chairman: This is one we had rather hoped not to have. In actual fact, it is a matter which has been concerning me more than somewhat and exploratory moves have all seemed to run up against a brick wall. The last time I saw Mr. Baker and our Secretary I said, "You will go up next week" and then unfortunately Mr. Baker became ill and just before this meeting I asked the Secretary what was happening about this conference question and he said he really would get going with Mr. Baker directly after the meeting. So the Conference at the moment is not nearly as tidily situated as it should be, and I think the Secretary would agree with me about that.

The questioner is asking whether it is necessary, in fact, to hold the meeting at either venue. The growers, although they may not be very many in that part of the world, are already expecting the Conference in that area and amongst other things we should undoubtedly create a certain amount of disappointment if we changed it to a completely different venue. There is, in addition, the fact that we do like to get away from the south coast on occasions, for obvious reasons, and we shall probably hope to return there after having this flight in the opposite direction to Weston-super-Mare. What concrete proposal would you like to make?

Mrs. Stanley-Evans: I would like to propose Scarborough and I would like to ask if there are any growers present living in the area who are likely to be very disappointed if it is not held in Yarmouth or Lowestoft.

Mr. Atkins: I should be most disappointed. This is the area from which the Mushroom Growers' Association sprang and it is the only area which has never had its share of activities of this kind.

Mr. Baker: I think the last Executive Committee suggested we should plan at least four years ahead, and I hope the Committee to be appointed will be able to do that. I would like to remind members that we must go to a conference town; we cannot get facilities in any town; we are restricted to those places that can provide hotel and hall accommodation.

The Chairman: I can assure you that Mr. Baker has probably had more to do with and knows more about this conference situation than anybody else in this room, and I think we are extremely lucky that he is prepared to keep putting time and energy into it. There was the point, the Secretary tells me, about Yarmouth in particular, that we were being charged what was considered an exorbitant amount for the hall—100 guineas –as opposed to conference towns, where we have had them for 25 guineas or nothing at all.

Mr. Thompson: As regards the co-operative, I would personally very much like to see this concerned with timber and the making of boxes. I think it is in a position to buy timber very cheaply and I hope we will press on with this through the co-operative. I think that is terribly important; most of us want to make our own boxes and to buy timber more cheaply. I think many of us would like to press on with the question of the nitrogen analysis too. A lot of work has been done looking into this and many of us would like to get some facts and figures.

One more thing: when we were at Weston I was having trouble with massed pinheads and I want to tell you now that I have got over them and that the credit must go to Tom Figgis.

The Chairman: I am delighted, and I am sure we all are, that Mr. Thompson has conquered his trouble. I believe it is a matter of ventilation?

Mr. Thompson: It is a question of moving air over them.

The Chairman: I would just say this—it is a trading company and not a co-operative we discussed. Otherwise I am sure you are dead right and that we should press on with it at top speed.

Dr. Edwards: On this nitrogen business, as the Executive Committee arranged at its last meeting, Mr. Atkins and I have arranged a short programme of tests which we hope will enable us to make some definite recommendation as to time and method and use of the analyses. One thing which would help in considering now, and making later, arrangements for an analyst to do this, would be to know how many members would probably wish to take advantage of such a scheme if it could be started. There are several laboratories which might do it but in most, if not all of them, the fee which would be charged would depend on the flow of samples. Quite obviously a laboratory which is handling 100 samples of a particular kind a week can streamline its methods of

handling them and do the work very much more cheaply than if they only have five coming in a week. So it will help us in discussing the whole matter with the laboratories concerned if members who would like to have their composts analysed regularly—assuming that we find it would be beneficial—would write in to the Secretary and say so, and say at the same time at what interval they would expect to be sending samples. It does not commit them, but at the moment we have no idea whether 10 members or 100 would be sending in or whether we should get 10 samples or 50 or 100 each week. That information would very much help us.

Dr. Edwards then thanked the Chairman, Mr. StanleyEvans, "for all he has done for us during his year of office", adding "It was my first year on the Committee; I have always had a very great respect for this Association and for the work this Committee does, and I have even more now for the work of the Committee and of its Chairman" (applause).

The Chairman: Thank you very much for those kind remarks. I thank everybody for the honour which I received in being chairman for a year.

MRA SYNTHETIC COMPOST

A new revised account written by the original Director of mushroom research at Yaxley

Dr. R. L. Edwards

The formula for this compost was published in 1949 after three years of intensive research. At that time the supply of rich heavy horse manure then considered necessary for mushroom growing was rapidly disappearing, and a new growing medium to replace it was urgently needed. The logical course was to aim at complete replacement; previous work on artificial composts was used as a basis in planning the MRA programme of experiments.

Wheat straw was used as the basis because it is the traditional litter in horse manure, and it is widely available in large quantities at a price which is not prohibitive. Since the MRA work was done, the varieties of wheat grown in England (and elsewhere) have changed and the straw has changed in character, the newer varieties being shorter, tougher and much more pithy. This has certainly caused difficulty to some growers using horse manure containing such straw, but I do not know of any systematic research on its effects, or on modifications of the composting process to overcome its disadvantages either in horse manure or in synthetic compost. On the other hand some growers have been quite successful in using horse manure containing this new straw (often called Capelle straw after one of the best known of the new varieties of wheat). There are two particular problems, to recognise and reach the correct moisture content and to get the right stage of breakdown of the straw. Both have always, in horse manure and in synthetic compost, depended on the grower's personal judgment, and that must always depend on experience. An alternative is to

use barley straw, which used to be considered too soft, but could be used with care. The new, stronger varieties of barley straw may be nearer to the quality of the wheat straw grown 15 years ago.

The formula

The following quantities to be used with 1 ton of straw (air-dry weight):

Activator 1.

	cwt.	lb.
Dried blood (12% N)	3	0
Superphosphate (18% P_2O_5) ..		14
Gypsum		35
Sulphate of potash		14
Carbonate of lime		50

If the dried blood has a different proportion of N, for each 1% more N, use 28 lb. less blood: for each 1% less N, use 28 lb. more blood.

Trace elements (not to be used in galvanised containers).

	oz.
Manganese sulphate	12
Aluminium sulphate	$2\frac{1}{2}$
Zinc sulphate	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Ammonium molybdate	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Potassium bromide	$\frac{1}{4}$
Iron sulphate	12
Copper sulphate	$2\frac{1}{2}$
Boric acid	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Chromium sulphate	$\frac{1}{2}$
Potassium iodide	$\frac{1}{4}$

Activator 2.

Superphosphate (18% P_2O_5) ..	14 lb.
Gypsum	70 lb.

The very small proportion of trace elements to be added needs special care to prevent loss and ensure even mixing. It should be made into a milky suspension by stirring in 1 gallon of hot water, the mixture for 1 ton of straw. This suspension can be applied with a sprinkler or coarse spray (it may clog a fine one) each time a layer of Activator A is put on.

In Great Britain these two activators can be purchased with the trace elements ready mixed for use, and in that case the special precautions for adding the trace elements do not apply.

Quantity to be used

The amount of straw needed per 1,000 sq. ft. of bed varies according to its condition. With very fresh strong wheat straw 3 tons of straw may make enough compost for 1,000 sq. ft. about 8 inches deep. If the straw has been used in windbreaks and has weathered for nearly a year, as sometimes happens, 4 tons will be needed.

It must not be thought that the use of this synthetic compost makes mushroom growing easier. It does not, and we neither claim nor expect that it will. With a horse manure compost the first very important part of the work has been done by the horse, who probably does it more consistently than ever we shall. Man-made variations start with the amount of litter used, and continue throughout composting.

A synthetic compost is in the grower's hands from the very start, and is quite as easy to spoil as a horse manure compost. Its great advantage is that it can be made at any time from stored materials; and it makes possible a uniformity not always attained in practice with horse manure.

Directions for Making Compost

The first essential operation is to wet the straw very thoroughly: dry straw is surprisingly resistant to breakdown in composting. A simple method of wetting baled straw, devised by Mr. B. A. Noble, is to lay the bales in a long row up to 3 deep, and to let water drip slowly on the straw from a drip-pipe. This is a pipe supplied with water through a T joint at its centre, and drilled along its top at intervals of 1-3 inches. The pipe must be levelled with wedges so that water drips evenly along its whole length. This device will wet a row of bales fairly thoroughly in a few days.

Quicker, more thorough wetting can be achieved by using coarse sprays supplied by a pump drawing water from a sump into which the surplus water drains. In this way the water is re-circulated and there need be no wastage. The water draining from the bales of straw has better wetting properties than fresh tap water. It is desirable to have filters on the pump intake from the sump to prevent blockage of the pump or the sprays, and the filters should have a large surface area.

Where turning is highly mechanised, the stack may be made with incompletely wetted straw and turned, with watering, a few days later to complete the wetting process, and then turned again when the Activator 1 is added; this turn being counted as stacking in the composting time-table.

We find it very useful to ferment the straw in bales before making up the stack. This is done by leaving the wet bales in a compact block and covering them with a tarpaulin. In cold weather it is helpful to place dry bales round the sides of the block. If wetting is done inside a well-closed building the tarpaulin should not be necessary.

The wet straw ferments and heats up, softening its glossy protective coat so that if more water has to be added later it will be readily absorbed, and a tighter stack can be made. This preliminary fermentation may take up to 7 days according to the state and wetness of the straw and the weather. As soon as the straw is hot enough to steam it can be stacked in successive layers a few inches deep, each layer being covered with the activator.

The straw should feel wet when stacked; if it is not it should be watered, preferably with a medium spray, before it is stacked with the activator.

The straw should be chopped before stacking, to give pieces mostly between 4 and 8 inches in length. Long straw can be used, but it is much more liable to be over-cooled by wind blowing on the stack, and compost made from long straw cannot be packed as compactly in the bed, so that less compost is used and yield per sq. ft. is lower.

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More nourishment

If you use Racing Stable manure, or other manure in which excess straw is present, the use of Adco "M" is strongly advised. The fermentation of this type of manure takes place more rapidly and effectively when Adco "M" is added. You get a more thorough breakdown of the strawy material, which then becomes available as food for the growing spawn. So your compost provides more nourishment for the mushrooms, and you get a bigger crop.

Better spawn run

Adco "M" produces a good quality compost of even texture. It provides an ideal medium for spawn run and helps to avoid greasy conditions, lack of aeration, and over wet compost – all of which delay mycelium growth. The spawn is able to make more rapid use of the food provided. It establishes itself more quickly and this is again a great help in preventing diseases and weed fungi. The faster the spawn grows and fills the compost the less likelihood is there of disease and weed fungi becoming serious competitors. A quick spawn growth also gives a quicker ultimate production.

You can have freedom from uncertainty in the composting process – by using Adco "M". It will pay you hands down. Adco "M" is specially formulated as a result of years of experiment, for the specific purpose of making mushroom compost. It can be used for composting with straw alone, if you wish. Or it can be used to compensate for variations in the quality and texture of your manure supply. Adco "M" provides the way to better mushroom compost every time.

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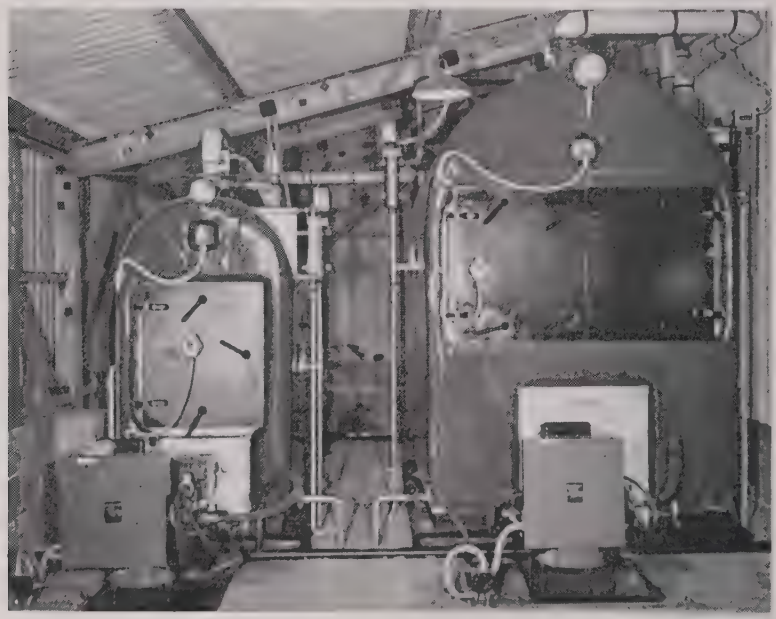

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To make the stack, mark out approximately 60 sq. ft. of floor in the composting shed for each ton of straw to be used. The stack can be up to 8 feet wide and of any length required by the quantity of straw to be used. The straw is then spread out at the rate of one bale on 20 sq. ft. and sprinkled with Activator No. 1.

The amount of activator per bale of straw can be calculated from the average weight of the bales, and this helps to spread the mixture evenly throughout the compost.

Alternate layers of straw and Activator are laid in this way until the stack is completed.

If the composting shed is well sheltered from wind, no special protection is necessary, but more even composting is obtained by surrounding the stack with dry bales of straw. This reduces or eliminates the cool dry layer otherwise formed all round the sides of the stack. The stack should be trodden firmly, particularly if long straw is being used.

It usually starts to heat up within a few days, and should reach 140° F., or more, within a week. It is then turned in the usual way, and this is repeated weekly. Activator 2 is sprinkled on the compost at the last turn, or when shaken out for filling, at the rate shown in the formula.

If the stack is very compact the interval between 2nd-3rd and 3rd-4th turns may be reduced to 4 or even 3 days.

Apart from the time intervals composting is the same as with horse manure, and care in turning is just as important. The compost will be ready for filling 3 to 5 weeks from stacking, depending on the original state of the straw and the vigour of the early fermentation. Growers will have to judge whether it is ready in 3 weeks by appearance and loss of strength in the straw. Synthetic compost has no droppings and therefore seems rather longer than horse manure at the same stage of development. It can be filled rather wetter than is usual with horse manure.

We have had a satisfactory compost after three weeks, and others have needed five weeks. The interval between turns still offers scope for investigation and possibly improvement.

The compost should be watered if necessary when turning, but it is preferable to get all the water needed in as early as possible, so that it does not need watering at the later turns. The stack is turned in the ordinary way. It is probably worthwhile to surround it with bales of straw during the whole composting period. It can be made a little narrower after each turn.

When filling, short compost must not be too tightly packed. Longer compost with most pieces of straw over 3 in. long can be packed as firmly as a flat board pressed on the top of the bed will make it.

After filling the beds or trays, they should be peak-heated in the usual way. The best duration of heating has not been exhaustively

studied, and in any case depends on the condition of the compost, but 24 hours at 130° F. is usually satisfactory. BHC can be mixed in the compost or used as a surface dust to control flies, etc., as with horse manure.

The biggest users of MRA compost have been Noble Mushrooms Ltd. Their highest yield was 3.9 lb. per sq. ft., which took 17 weeks, and in a direct comparison between horse manure and MRA compost, extending over 14 houses of each, the synthetic compost averaged 2.68 and horse manure 2.44 lb. per sq. ft. in 10 weeks picking. They have a Handcraft hut in which bales of straw are wetted by over-head sprinklers, surplus water draining into a sump from which it is re-circulated; this makes their straw-wetting independent of frost. The straw is chopped by a Robust chopper already mentioned. The compost is sometimes chopped again before filling.

It is worthwhile mentioning some of the points on which comparison with horse manure will be made by growers. MRA synthetic compost does not confer freedom from pests or disease; most of the common pests and diseases have appeared on it at some time. It is not foolproof, and can be spoiled by mismanagement at any stage just as easily as horse manure. It is rather liable to reheat after spawning, particularly if a thick, tight bed is used; trays must be stacked with enough air space between them. The cost depends mainly on the price of straw and dried blood and, of course, any comparison with manure depends on the price paid for that. One clear advantage over horse manure is that all the materials can be stored for long periods and a stack of synthetic compost can be started whenever you wish.

In recent years the comparative prices of straw, dried blood, and manure have tended to favour manure, and MRA compost has been less used in England. There is still room for development particularly in finding cheaper sources of nitrogen and in overcoming disadvantages, such as the rapid release of ammonia, when urea is used. The original formula still remains as a commercially usable alternative to horse manure.

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2nd Row (l. to r.): Mrs. Norman (Nat. Sec. Townswoman's Guild), Catherine Rose (Northcliffe Newspapers) and H. Taylor (European Editor, Central Office of Information).

3rd Row (l. to r.): Miss N. Littlejohn and friend ("Reveille"), Hugh Johnson ("Vogue") and G. V. Allen (MGA) talking to Michael Brooks (B.B.C.).

4th Row (l. to r.): Miss Gwen Allson ("Hotel Management"), Miss Playle ("The Townswoman") and Miss S. Reed ("Hotel Review").

LAUNCHING OF MUSHROOM INFORMATION BUREAU AND "MONTY MUSHROOM"

The invitations which went out asking the Press to meet Monty at the launching of the Mushroom Information Bureau, at The Mermaid Theatre Restaurant, on 29th March, aroused a great deal of interest. Many people thought that Monty was a Field Marshal and whilst some 'phoned up to make sure others came to the party to find out.

Whether it was Monty or just mushrooms we cannot tell but the response to the invitations was most enthusiastic. We had one of the largest Press gatherings the MGA has ever organised and counted among our guests representatives of the national and provincial daily and evening papers, the Trade Press for food, agriculture and horticulture, representatives of the women's magazines, of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Central Office of Information and the BBC: a total of 74.

The party was held in the afternoon which our guests appreciated as a change from the conventional morning Press party. We tried to cater for every demand through the whole range of drinks to tea and coffee (the latter two being surprisingly popular) and had a menu including four mushroom specialities: hot mushrooms and bacon, mushroom and prawn dip, pickled mushrooms and cream cheese, and mushroom pâté. The programme included business as well as pleasure and we gave our guests ample supplies of information about mushrooms. We had a display board showing our wall chart and our recipe leaflets and, for the first time, Monty Mushroom posters; each guest received a wallet containing samples of all our publicity material and a specially produced leaflet of facts and figures about the mushroom industry. (This literature was also sent to those who were unable to attend.)

The Mushroom Information Bureau was formally launched by the MGA Chairman and in his speech he said that it had been set up to act as a source of help and information for the housewife, the Press and for other bodies who may from time to time need information about mushrooms or want special recipes using them. Mr. Griffiths explained that the industry was expanding at the steady rate of 20% a year and that each year the consumer demand had increased to absorb the extra production. Even so, as he emphasized, our annual consumption per head of population was still only about one-third of the French and with this fact in mind the industry was aware that it could expand further if it had the right means of educating and persuading the public to eat more mushrooms. The Mushroom Information Bureau and Monty were launched to start this work, the Bureau to educate people through new recipes and Monty by becoming the "Mr. Cube" of the industry.

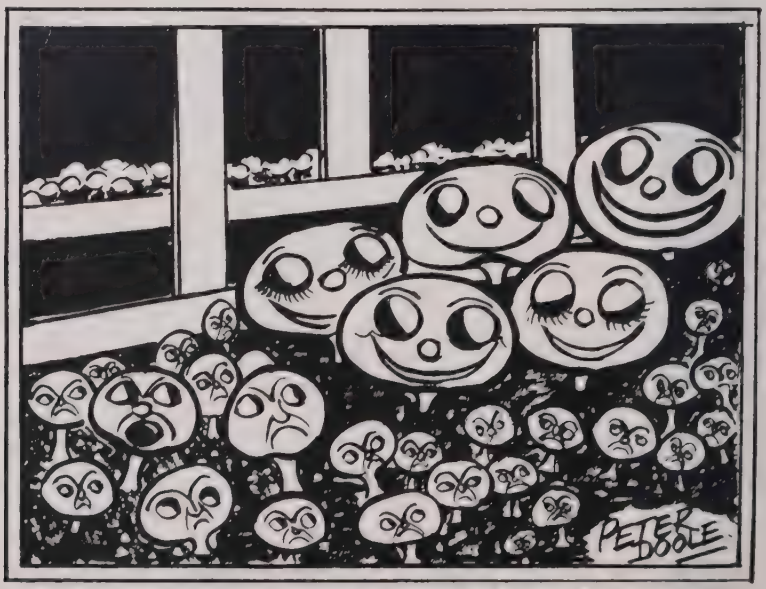
Most of our guests were enthusiastic mushroom eaters and many of them have since written to say how much they enjoyed those we gave them; many of them also, have written about Monty and the Bureau in their papers.

Calypso

SEND YOUR SON TO COVENTRY!

As many mushroom growers know,
We ought to track the food we grow,
And institute while strength prevails,
A follow-up on all our sales.
Perhaps a sales-account entry
Comes weekly down from Coventry—
But does one think (one never stops),
Just how the produce looks in shops?
So let's decide our son and heir
Is going to be sent up there,
To follow-up the 'rooms we send
And see them to their bitter end!
We hope while there he won't sit smug,
But rather hope that he might plug
Some incidental flattering
Of mushroom food, by scattering
Of paper sail-planes all around
To fall as adverts on the ground—
A-floating down on wings dihedral
From top of Coventry Cathedral—
To boost this pro-saliva food
Where rode Madame Godiva nude.
So send your son to cultivate
A taste for mushrooms on a plate,
To hand a chef his oven-tray
Or serve in shops in Coventry.

F.P. (Belfast).



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CONFERENCE VENUE CHANGED

Yarmouth—Not Lowestoft

Because of the difficulty experienced with regard to hotel accommodation on the dates required, the 1961 Exhibition/Conference of the Association will now be held at Great Yarmouth and not 10 miles south at Lowestoft, as previously arranged and announced.

The dates remain the same, Monday, 16th October, Tuesday, 17th and Wednesday 18th and any members who have already booked in at The Royal Hotel, Lowestoft, are advised to cancel their bookings right away and reserve accommodation at The Carlton Hotel, Great Yarmouth, which is to be the MGA headquarters.

Hotel charges are 28/6d. per head per night, bed and breakfast, for a room without a private bath and 35/- per night for a room with private bath.

It is hoped, in the near future, to circularise all members with a list of other hotels in Great Yarmouth.

One of the main obstacles in the arrangements for a conference and exhibition in East Anglia—the first time this event has taken place in that area—has been the lack of suitable halls on suitable dates and finally this has been overcome.
The hall, which is near the centre of the town, will be available from early Monday morning, 16th October but must be cleared by midday on Thursday, 18th October.

The general programme has not yet been completed, but there will be a reception and Dance, the mushroom competitions, a farm visit to the Broadlands Mushroom Farm about nine miles away at Martham, by kind invitation of Messrs. Bradfield Bros., and it is hoped to arrange a machinery demonstration on the farm. There will be at least two lectures.

Full details of the programme will be sent to all members later and a plan of the hall and other details will be sent to the sundriesmen.

With regard to the hotel accommodation, members are asked to make their own arrangements without too much delay, especially with regard to The Carlton, where accommodation is limited.

OPEN DAY AT LITTLEHAMPTON

The annual "open day" at the Glasshouse Crops Research Institute at Rustington, Sussex, has been fixed for Thursday, 25th May. Growers and others genuinely interested in the research in progress are very welcome to attend. For ordinary visitors proceedings will start at 2.15 p.m.

AMERICAN SHORT COURSE

The annual mushroom industry Short Course will take place at Pennsylvania from 19th to 21st June. Application forms are available from the MGA Secretary.

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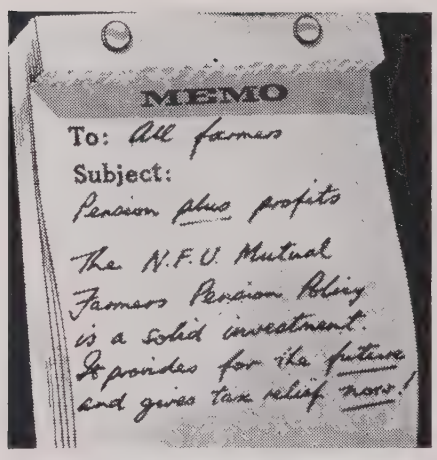

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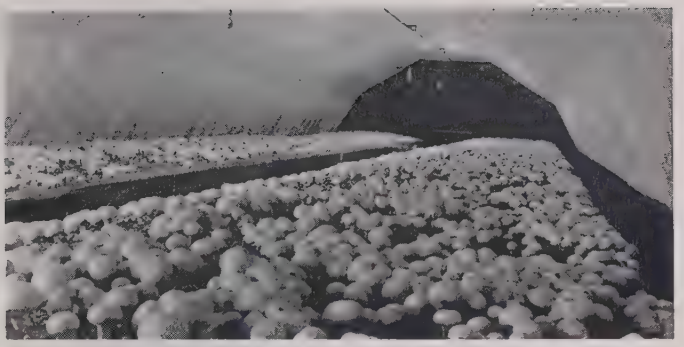

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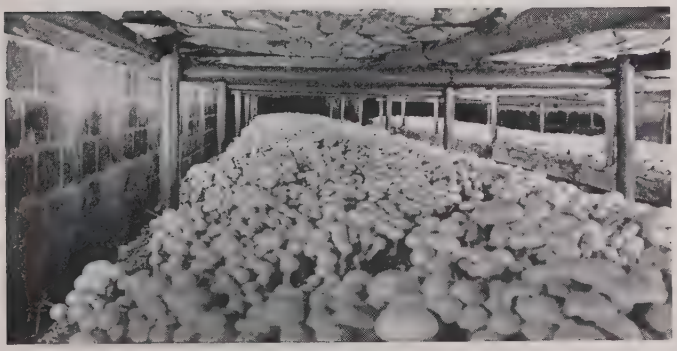

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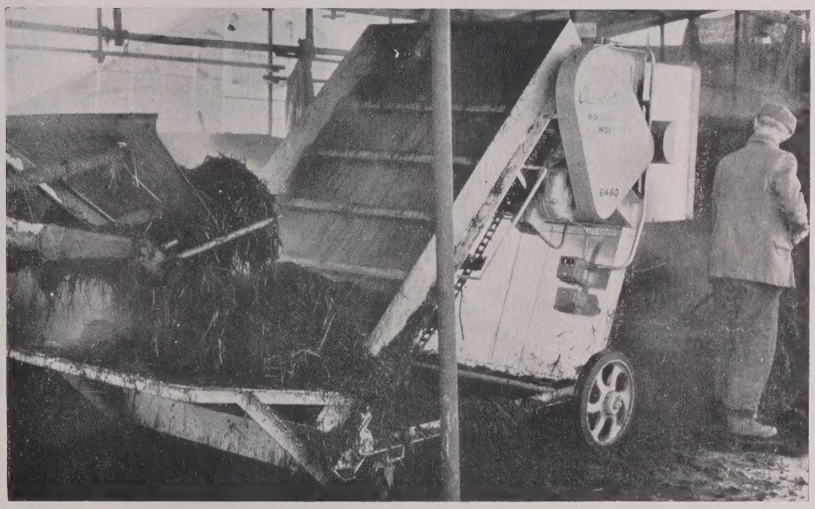

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